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BHS A.S.S.I.S.T.

DECEMBER NEWSLETTER



STRESS LESS, CELEBRATE MORE

How did that time of the year we used to regard as “magic” become so fraught with anxiety and stress? Holidays as a grown-up are very different from what they were when we were kids, says Jane Ehrman, MEd, CHES, a mind-body medicine specialist at the Center for Integrative Medicine at the Cleveland Clinic. “As grown-ups, we’re responsible for making the magic happen.” That means that there’s a total shift of energy: jubilant anticipation turns to anxiety and stress. Shift the energy back and enjoy the spirit of the holidays by changing the way you approach four classic stress-inducing situations.

Travel Hassles Occur

The key to getting through your travels unscathed is to plan ahead as best you can, and then let go of what you can’t control, Ehrman says. When travel is interrupted, instead of melting down and worrying about how it will impact the rest of your day, see the extra time as a gift.

Now you have time to take a brisk walk around the airport terminal, call a friend or family member or catch up on your reading. “Just stay in the moment and use your time efficiently and effectively — instead of worrying, which will only drain you,” she says. Of course, having kids with you makes it more complicated: That’s when the planning comes into play. Make sure to pack things like playing cards, kids’ books, coloring books, travel-size board games and healthy snacks to keep kids occupied. Also, remember that most of the time, they take their cue from your behavior; if you’re calm and upbeat, they’re more likely to follow suit.

Expensive Gifts Aren’t in Your Plans

There’s a reason January and February are big depression months: It’s when the credit card bills from the holidays start rolling in. It goes back to that pressure to make magic — especially for kids. Emphasize the parts of the holiday that don’t have to do with money (like spending time together baking, playing games or making holiday crafts). Money conversations are harder to have with friends (especially if their finances appear to be smooth sailing).

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GRIEVING & THE HOLIDAYS

There is Help

The holidays can remind us of the things we've lost over the years. Don't let it overcome your holiday cheer.

Holidays are often difficult for anyone who has experienced the death of someone loved. Rather than being times of family togetherness, sharing and thanksgiving, holidays can bring feelings of sadness, loss and emptiness.

Talk About Your Grief

During the holiday season, don't be afraid to express your feelings of grief. Ignoring your grief won't make the pain go away and talking about it openly often makes you feel better. Find caring friends and relatives who will listen — without judging you. They will help make you feel understood. Or, contact your EAP for professional assistance. The EAP can assist in finding a mental health provider who can help you get through the holiday season on a positive note.

Eliminate Unnecessary Stress

You may already feel stressed, so don't overextend yourself. Avoid isolating yourself, but be sure to recognize the need to have special time for yourself. Realize also that merely "keeping busy" won't distract you from your grief, but may actually increase stress and postpone the need to talk out thoughts and feelings related to your grief.

Be With Supportive, Comforting People

Identify those friends and relatives who understand that the holiday season can increase your sense of loss and who will allow you to talk openly about your feelings. Find those persons who encourage you to be yourself and accept your feelings — both happy and sad.



Talk About the Person Who Has Passed

Include the person's name in your holiday conversation. If you are able to talk candidly, other people are more likely to recognize your need to remember that special person who was an important part of your life.

Do What Is Right for You During the Holidays

Well-meaning friends and family often try to prescribe what is good for you during the holidays. Instead of going along with their plans, focus on what you want to do. Discuss your wishes with a caring, trusted friend. Talking about these wishes will help you clarify what it is you want to do during the holidays.

Plan Ahead for Family Gatherings

Decide which family traditions you want to continue and which new ones you would like to begin. Structure your holiday time. This will help you anticipate activities, rather than just reacting to whatever happens. Getting caught off guard can create feelings of panic, fear and anxiety during the time of the year when your feelings of grief are already heightened. As you make your plans, however, leave room to change them if you feel it is appropriate.

EAP
EMPLOYEE
ASSISTANCE
PROGRAM

If you are struggling with grief, you are not alone! Call your BHS Care Coordinator at 800-245-1150 to discuss the various options available to you.

HOLIDAYS ON A BUDGET

Have you planned your spending?

It's the time of year for giving gifts, entertaining, hosting holiday parties – and for many, overspending and financial stress. Setting a realistic holiday budget and making sure to stick to it are the first steps to a more affordable and less stressful season. Use the tips and tools below to enjoy the season without letting holiday spending get the better of you.

1. Set Your Budget

The best way to start making a holiday budget is to look at your spending during last year's holiday season. In what areas did you spend more than planned? Next, make a list of the holiday purchases and events you plan to spend money on this year. Consider all of your major spending categories like gifts, entertaining, meals, and travel and then estimate how much you can afford to spend in each category. Have a "micro budget" – a specific spending limit – for each person on your gift list. Many financial planners recommend spending no more than 1.5 percent of annual income on holiday expenses.

2. Get Creative

One great way to save money and impress friends and family is to get creative. Store-bought gifts are great, but homemade gifts are often more meaningful and most recipients truly appreciate your time and effort. Ideas for creative gift projects are plentiful online.

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The Office Party that You Don't Want to Attend

First, Dr. Udewitz says, try to identify what it is about the situation that makes you feel uncomfortable. Having awareness won't make your feelings go away, but it can help you create a plan for getting through the situation. Again, it's often a matter of the language you use in your own head. Phrases like "these events are horrible" only reinforce those negative thoughts. Try writing a new script for yourself, whether it's a simple mantra like "I am intelligent and charming" or "this is just one night." Also, remember that we often tend to evaluate our social "performance" as much worse than it is

If you like the idea of a personal touch and affordability but don't have the time or skill to make gifts yourself, the ultimate marketplace for homemade gifts is [Etsy](#), where you can find crafty items from over 200,000 sellers.

3. Join Together

Instead of excessively spending money on each other this year, join together with family members to help those who may be less fortunate. Online opportunities are easy to find. Organizations like the United Way are always supportive and can provide information on giving opportunities.

4. Entertain for Less

Holidays are a wonderful time to entertain, but a little planning and budgeting can help you avoid financial headaches. Set a budget for meals, parties and family get-togethers.

By starting early and staying on track, you can avoid the pitfalls of post-holiday credit card bills and finding ways to make ends meet. If you need assistance with your financial planning goals, contact BHS. A Care Coordinator can provide information about the resources available through your BHS benefits.



(worrying that we offended someone or put our foot in our mouth), when in reality, no one else thought anything of it.

You Tried Hard to Eat Well, but the Stuffing Won

The last thing we need to add to our psyche is guilt about the food we eat – yet we do it all the time. The first thing you need is perspective: A few days of indulgent eating can be a setback, but they don't have to spell disaster. Think about what you could have done differently (so you're prepared next time), and then cut it loose. Every day is a new day, and you get a clean slate.

Excerpts taken from the Cleveland Clinic Wellness Resources



Slow Down & Appreciate the Holidays

Christmas is coming. The goose is getting fat. Your hair is turning gray, you can't sleep, and your ulcers are flaring up. If this sound like your typical holiday pre-show, it's time to start doing things differently. Slow down and appreciate the holiday season with your family and friends.

- Show love and leave anger at the door
- Remember, this is the season for giving
- Soak in the holiday spirit
- Stop and smell the roses (or the Christmas tree)
- Don't let family drama get you down
- Opt out of the shopping madness and cybershop
- Focus on the kids
- Prioritize your holidays
- Reset your expectations
- Make use of time off
- Plan your wellness path; exercise, eating relatively well and minimizing alcohol
- Discuss financial goals with your family to limit unnecessary spending

Honey Glazed Almonds

Ingredients:

1 1/2 cups raw, unblanched almonds
1 tablespoon sugar
1 1/2 tablespoons honey
1/2 teaspoon ground chili powder
1/4 teaspoon ground cumin
1/4 teaspoon salt



Nutritional Information Per Serving:

138 calories, 10.6g fat, 4.6g protein, 8.5g carbs

Active Time: 5 minutes

Total Time: 20 minutes

Servings: 10 servings

Instructions:

1. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Place the almonds in a medium nonstick skillet; cook over medium heat for 6 minutes or until lightly toasted, shaking pan frequently.
3. Combine the remaining ingredients in a 2-cup glass measure. Microwave at HIGH for 30 seconds.
4. Add honey mixture to pan, and cook 2 minutes, stirring constantly.
5. Arrange almond mixture on prepared baking sheet in a single layer; let stand 10 minutes. Break apart any clusters.